

# The Real Property Law Section

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STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA

## REAL PROPERTY LAW SECTION REFLECTS AND LOOKS TO THE FUTURE AT ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY RETREAT

By Theodore K. Klaassen

At their recent 25th anniversary retreat, members of the Real Property Law Section (RPLS) heard war stories from founding members, threw a gala dinner dance and casino night, and looked forward to a high-tech future. The section's annual retreat was held at the end of April in Huntington Beach.

To mark the retreat's silver anniversary, the section invited its founders to reflect on their work in real property law over the past 25 years. Among the panel of section founders that spoke to a full ballroom were legal luminaries Marvin Starr, Marvin Leon, Burton Fohrman, Robert Caplan, Alan Wayte and Professor Roger Bernhardt. "Old issues seem to morph into new issues," Leon said before the panelists shared their insights on a number of important real property issues such as leasing, environmental requirements, international transactions and ever-changing ownership structures.



*RPLS Founding Members Speak at Retreat. Back Row - Marvin Starr, Marvin Leon, Burton Fohrman; Front Row - Alan Wayte, Robert Caplan, Prof. Roger Bernhardt*

Wayte, senior counsel with Piper Rudnick Gray Cary, was one of the founding members of the RPLS and the second chair of its executive committee. Wayte organized the first retreat 25 years ago in Palm Springs in the face of substantial opposition. "We had to do a lot of work to get people to the retreat," Wayte said. "There was no mandatory CLE back then, so we had to prime the pump. We called all of the big law firms and asked them to send people." The section has grown from 12 original members to almost 8,000 members who comprise 30 subsections.

While Wayte said he is proud of how the section has grown over the past quarter century, he considers the greatest benefits of the RPLS to be friendships he has made and the knowledge he has obtained. "The RPLS is one of the best ways to find out about California real estate law," Wayte said. "Membership is an absolute must for young lawyers who want to get involved in real estate law."

RPLS members have educational opportunities that were unheard of 25 years ago, according to Nargis Choudhry, chair of the RPLS's executive committee. The section has recently implemented new technology to educate its members throughout the state. Instead of live meetings, section members can reach out to each other through teleseminars and "webinars," which are seminars broadcast simultaneously over the phone and the Internet.

"The technology we have implemented allows better communication and information sharing among more specialized practice areas," Choudhry said. "Where before it was impractical to gather the practitioners of a sub-specialty in one location, those section members can now come together in a teleseminar or webinar. Practitioners will be able to obtain more specialized education than they could before."

According to Choudhry, the section's goals include more statewide programming through the use of new technology and more outreach to lawyers involved with other bar associations. In June, the section will have its first three-association joint CLE meeting with the real property law sections of the Alameda County and Contra Costa County bar associations.



*Having fun at the Retreat Gala Dinner Dance. From Left - Nargis Choudhry, Chair, Real Property Law Section; Julie Spezia, Executive Director, Housing California; Tony Arostegui, Real Property Law Section Executive Committee; Pam Wilson, Director of Sections, State Bar of California; Jeff Schneider, Vice-Chair, Real Property Law Section.*



25th Anniversary Retreat Cake

Section members looking to have fun were not disappointed at the silver anniversary celebration, which culminated with a gala dinner dance and casino night. A live band played hit songs from the last 25 years, while people danced and wagered stacks of colored chips at poker, blackjack and roulette tables. Revelers also bid on silent auction items from wine to a week's stay in Paris, to benefit Housing California, a non-profit housing advocacy group. At one point in the evening, the music stopped and uniformed waiters

wheeled in a white anniversary cake decorated with the real property section's familiar red skyline logo.

Special thanks to Ex Com members Jeff Schneider and Rich Carlston who chaired the committee that spent countless hours organizing this year's retreat and to Ex Com member Tony Arostegi for organizing the successful raffle and silent auction.

### SUBSECTION LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE EDUCATES AND ENERGIZES

The day before the RPLS retreat, the Subsection Leadership Conference was held at the Hyatt in Huntington Beach. Organized by Executive Committee members Helaine Ashton, Holly Cordova, and Mike Dullea, the conference brought together new and old subsection leaders for a day of sharing ideas and information on helping our subsections serve our membership. An important part of the conference was a presentation by State Bar staff about changes in CLE programming, which requires that all CLE programs for a calendar year be identified by November of the preceding year. Also, new capabilities for teleseminars and webinars were discussed which will allow subsections to provide programming for practitioners across the state at a single event.

### WEBSITE UPDATE

Thanks to ExCom member David Blackwell and State Bar staff member Michael Mullen, the RPLS website is up to date and loaded with lots of information relevant to the real estate lawyer's practice, including links to current legislative proposals and the status of the real property law specialization proposal. You can also find current and past Journal issues and discussion boards on several hot topics. Also, if you want to find State Bar CLE opportunities in a flash, look for the "Online CLE" button under the heading "Sections" on the right hand side of the State Bar homepage.

### IMPORTANT REMINDER—GET YOUR STATE BAR PROFILE SET UP TODAY!

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